

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3357

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0321

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MILI AO

SUBJECT: CLASHES BETWEEN FNLA AND MPLA

REF: LUANDA 0321 (NOTAL) #

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

1. THE FULL STORY IS NOT YET KNOWN ABOUT THE FNLA/MPLA CLASHES DURING MARCH 23 AND 24, BUT WE HAVE COME UP WITH TWO ACCOUNTS THAT PROBABLY STICK FAIRLY CLOSELY TO THE FACTS. THE LOCAL PRESS HAS PUBLISHED NOTHING WORTHWHILE. FNLA HAS TAKEN OVER ANGOLA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER, A PROVINCIA, AND THE REPORTING IS SO SLANTED AS TO BE PAINFULLY EMBARRASSING.

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2. AN FNLA SOURCE TOLD ME THAT ON MARCH 23 AN FNLA PATROL IN A GHETTO CAPTURED SOME "SNIPERS," WHO TURNED OUT TO BE MPLA TROOPS, AND KEPT THEM PRISONER IN THEIR QUARTERS IN THE GHETTO. MPLA DEMANDED THEIR RELEASE. WHEN FNLA REFUSED A CAR LOADED WITH MPLA SOLDIERS DROVE PAST THE FNLA QUARTERS AND SPRAYED IT WITH SUB-MACHINE GUN FIRE. FOUR FNLA TROOPS WERE KILLED. FNLA STILL REFUSED TO RELEASE THE PRISONERS AND AFTER SPORADIC SHOOTING THAT NIGHT MPLA DROVE PAST THE MAIN FNLA HEADQUARTERS THE MORNING OF MARCH 24, BLASTED THE VICINITY WITH SUBMACHINE GUNS AND KILLED ONE FNLA SOLDIER. MPLA SNIPERS THEN BEGAN FIRING FROM BUILDINGS TO THE FRONT AND REAR OF THE FNLA HEADQUARTERS. MY SOURCE SAID THAT ONLY A FEW WOUNDED TURNED UP IN THE HOSPITAL AND INCLUDED SOME CIVILIANS, AMONG THEM AN EIGHT YEAR OLD BOY AND A WOMAN IN HER SIXTIES.

3. WE HAVE ANOTHER VERSION, THIS ONE FROM THE PORTUGUESE HIGH COMMAND. OUR SOURCE THERE SAID THAT SATURDAY OR SUNDAY FNLA ROUNDED UP "BANDITS" WHO WERE ACTUALLY MPLA SOLDIERS AND ACTIVISTS AND REFUSED TO RELEASE THEM. ON SUNDAY SHOOTING BEGAN BETWEEN THE MPLA AND FNLA IN A GHETTO AND MPLA SHOT UP THE FNLA OFFICE AND KILLED THREE FNLA SOLDIERS. ON MONDAY, MARCH 24 SHOTS WERE FIRED INTO THE FNLA HEADQUARTERS FROM A BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET. ONE FNLA SOLDIER WAS KILLED. FNLA MEMBER OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL, JOHNNY EDUARDO, CALLED THE HIGH COMMISSIONER IN A PANIC AND SAID THAT FNLA HEADQUARTERS HAD BEEN SURROUNDED BY THE MPLA AND THE PORTUGUESE ARMY, THAT 100 PEOPLE HAD BEEN KILLED, THAT FNLA WAS RUNNING OUT OF AMMUNITION AND THAT "THIS MEANS CIVIL WAR." ON THE AFTERNOON OF MARCH 24 THE HIGH COMMISSIONER MET WITH THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COUNCIL AND ARRANGED A CEASE FIRE.

4. HIGH COMMISSIONER GENERAL CARDOSO WENT TO THE FNLA HEADQUARTERS DURING THE MORNING OF MARCH 24 TO SURVEY THE SITUATION AND TRY TO STOP THE SHOOTING. ACCORDING TO SOME ACCOUNTS HE ENCOUNTERED NO SNIPER FIRE. A CONGEN OFFICER DROVE BY THE BUILDING AT 11:30 AM AND ALL WAS QUIET. MEANWHILE, PORTUGUESE TROOPS WERE SENT INTO THE AREA TO FLUSH OUT ANY POTENTIAL SNIPERS. BY MID-AFTERNOON THE SITUATION HAD QUIETED BUT SCATTERED REPORTS

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CAME IN FROM AROUND THE CITY OF GRENADE BLASTS AND SHOOTING.

5. IN THE EARLY EVENING OF MARCH 24, THE MILITARY COMMANDERS OF FNLA AND MPLA MADE JOINT APPEALS TO THEIR TROOPS TO OBSERVE A CEASE FIRE AND TO RETURN TO THEIR BASES. THE APPEAL, COUPLED WITH INCREASED PORTUGUESE ARMY PRESENCE IN KEY AREAS, HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT AND ONLY OCCASIONAL SHOTS WERE REPORTED DURING THE NIGHT OF MARCH 24-25.

6. UNCONFIRMED ACCOUNTS REPORT FIGHTING IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ANGOLA - NOVA LISBOA AND SA DA BANDEIRA. ONE PRESS ACCOUNT SAYS THAT ALL BUSINESSES WERE CLOSED IN SA DA BANDEIRA ON MARCH 24 TO MOURN A YOUTH WHO WAS BEATEN TO DEATH BY UNITA RECRUITS, WHOSE TRUCK HE HAD SMASHED INTO WITH HIS MOTOR BIKE. UNITA HAS PUBLICLY APOLOGIZED FOR THE INCIDENT. IN NOVA LISBOA UNCONFIRMED REPORTS HAVE COME IN OF SHOOTING BETWEEN MPLA AND FNLA.

7. AS OF LATE MARCH 25 THINGS SEEM CALM. FNLA'S PAIL OF GRIEVANCES AGAINST MPLA HAS BEEN RUNNING OVER FOR A LONG TIME AND THIS LATEST INCIDENT, WHATEVER THE FACTS, MERELY BRINGS CLOSER THE DAY OF RECKONING. THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY HERE ARE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE AND WE WILL REPORT THEIR REACTION TO THIS LATEST VIOLENCE IN A SUBSEQUENT MESSAGE.
KILLORAN

NOTE BY OC/T: #REF: LUANDA 0321 AS RECEIVED.

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